

# Cool tools: an overview – Table of Contents

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## Introduction to Section 2

By Terry Freedman

### Keeping up-to-date

If you're fairly new to the whole Web 2.0 phenomenon, this section is a good place to start. As its name implies, the purpose of this section is to give you a broad perspective on what Web 2.0 is all about, and what it comprises. Or at least, what it consisted of when this was published – the list of Web 2.0 applications is growing all the time. Hopefully, you'll find the references in this section (and the rest of the book) useful in terms of keeping up-to-date with developments. Useful sources of information in this respect include:

Classroom 2.0 <http://classroom20.ning.com/>

Coming of Age 2.0 <http://comingofage.ning.com/>

K12 Online Conference <http://k12onlineconference.org/>

### So what's in store in this section?

Clarence Fisher kicks off with a few facts and figures about Web 2.0. The stats give us something of an idea of the scale of this phenomenon. Of course, they don't tell the whole story. For example, there aren't any figures for the number of people who start blogging and then stop after 2 days! Nevertheless, I think you will find the information here quite astonishing.

Next, Elaine Freedman provides us with an evaluation of the Shambles website. Unlike most of the other contributors to this book, Elaine is fairly new to Web 2.0, which is why I asked her to write the review.

For the most part, contributors were asked to write their contribution from the standpoint of answering the question: how will this information help a teacher in her classroom next Wednesday morning? However, I allowed some flexibility, and the chapter by Miles Berry, comparing Open Source and Web 2.0, is a case in point. This is an interesting essay of the "compare and contrast" type.

Next, Damaris Revell gives an account of e-learning from a learner's perspective, the learner in question being herself. By understanding e-learning from the "customer's" perspective we can help to shape a more interesting and useful course or learning experience.

The chapter which follows, Effective learning through collaboration, was written by Steve Lee and Miles Berry, and provides both a theoretical or pedagogical underpinning to Web 2.0 and a comprehensive round-up of the type of tools available.

The two chapters that follow are each concerned with RSS. This is the glue which binds many Web 2.0 applications together. Any acronym or abbreviation is daunting when it is first encountered, but John Evans gives a layperson's guide to what RSS is, whilst Quentin d'Souza suggests some interesting uses for it. There is, as you might imagine, a degree of overlap between the two chapters; taken together, they ensure that you will not have to consult further sources of information on the subject unless you really want to.

Next come several reviews penned by Sharon Peters, Elaine Freedman, Sarah Hillier and myself. Sarah's review of "Their Space", a report by the UK Think Tank Demos, is particularly interesting because she is a teenager herself. What does **she** think of internet safety, for instance?

And last but not least, Kathy Cassidy writes intriguingly about children who blog before they can write, in "You're never too young to learn". Fascinating stuff!

So, I hope you find this section both enjoyable and useful. Happy reading!

## Did you know...

By Clarence Fisher

*You are not alone..... In this chapter, Clarence Fisher puts the Web 2.0 phenomenon into perspective with some pretty astonishing statistics.*

### The facts

Are you wondering about the value of teaching using social software in your classroom? Consider some of these statistics.....

- According to the blog tracking service Technorati (<http://www.technorati.com>), as of August 2006 there were over 50 million blogs in the world.
- The number of blogs online is doubling every six months.
- There are 150 000 new blogs created each day which breaks down to 7,200 each hour, or two new blogs every second!
- All of these blogs create an incredible amount of content. Over 1.6 million new articles are posted each day; 19 new posts every second.
- The Apple iTunes store lists over 65 000 different podcasts that you can subscribe to for free.
- There are more podcasts available worldwide than there are radio stations.
- There is expected to be over 60 million podcast listeners within five years
- YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>), the site that lets anyone upload their own videos, handles over 50,000 new video uploads each day and hosts over 45 terabytes<sup>1</sup> of video files.
- YouTube distributes over 50 million videos every day. That's over 9,300 total years of viewing time in less than a year that the site has been online.

### Sources

<http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000436.html>

<http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=165600711>

[http://digg.com/tech\\_news/Podcast\\_News:\\_Podcasts\\_Outnumber\\_Radio\\_Station\\_Worldwide](http://digg.com/tech_news/Podcast_News:_Podcasts_Outnumber_Radio_Station_Worldwide)

[http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB115689298168048904-5wWyrSwyn6RfVfz9NwLk774VUWc\\_20070829.html?mod=rss\\_free](http://online.wsj.com/public/article/SB115689298168048904-5wWyrSwyn6RfVfz9NwLk774VUWc_20070829.html?mod=rss_free)

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<sup>1</sup> A terabyte is 1024 gigabytes – Ed.

## Review of the Shambles website's Web 2.0 section

By Elaine Freedman

*Just in case this book isn't enough for you, Elaine Freedman has explored the Shambles website on your behalf. What's her verdict?*

<http://www.shambles.net/>

First I must explain "where I am coming from": I am a newbie to Web 2.0. I have heard explanations, but not had to explore the reality.

There are two ways of finding information about Web 2.0 on the Shambles website. You can put the term into the site's search engine or you can go through the e-learning link on the menu on the left hand side of the page. The displays you get are quite different. Using the search engine you obtain a Google list of 124 links. Going through the e-learning route you obtain a brief explanation of Web 2.0 and a series of links usefully grouped according to function.

There is a huge number of links to explore. I found that it was easier to use the e-learning route to explore as the categories helped me to choose where I wished to go. Also, using this route there is a short explanation of what Web 2.0 is. Unfortunately some of the links proved to be dead. It would be helpful if there was a way to report this.

The plethora of Web 2.0 sites appeared to be overwhelming. However, the categorisation helped to stimulate me to explore, and I hope it does you too.

It is obvious that a lot of time and care has been put into collecting this information together, and for someone who wishes to start or add to their knowledge of the availability and variety of web tools this is a useful place to start and bookmark.

No critique is offered on the sites listed so you are free to come to your own conclusions about the usefulness, appropriateness and safety of using such sites with the young people with whom you work.

## Experiencing e-learning as a mature learner

By Damaris Revell

*In this chapter, Damaris describes her experiences of distance learning using ICT at post graduate level and relate it to teaching and learning in the secondary school classroom.*

### About my MA experience

It's always very healthy for teachers to try to learn something. Especially anything they haven't done before - in my case it was skiing that led me to realise that due to my lack of confidence and fear of failure I was behaving like bottom set year 9<sup>2</sup>! It's also valuable to use existing experiences and skills in new ways and this is what I've been doing having begun studying for an MA in ICT and Education part time and 100% distance learning. Having been using ICT in many different ways to support my teaching and my students' learning over many years and across many changes and developments in ICT it has been both humbling and eye-opening to learn using ICT myself.

I was sent outlines and a very useful guide to distance learning and was given the times of the online seminars and a timetable for the publishing of the reading and weekly tasks. All learning takes place within an online learning environment – documents are posted here, participants can message and email each other, shared documents can be created and shared. The online chat seminars also take place within this environment and every word typed is saved for reference by both participants and absentees.

The readings were posted and the first online chat seminar arrived and was totally unlike any learning experience previously experienced. There is no eye-contact and no face-to-face judgements to be made from people's appearances. People identify themselves through choosing a font and colour that is different from the other participants and then really it's a bit of a free for all – you can contribute as fast as you can type!. The need for the tutor to prod, poke, praise, question and encourage is paramount but the tutor also needs to let the students explore and learn from each other. I was acutely aware of second language students and the courage and skills they need to join in within such an environment. At the end of the hour the seminar draws to a close and is posted on the conference for all to read.

The rest of the learning takes place through reading a paper that is posted weekly, outlining the week's subject and readings and – at times – giving a group or individual written activity. Postings to the conference contribute too. At the end of a term of weekly seminars and reading an assignment is written which has to be reflective, personal and academic in tone. This has to be submitted in hard copy via snail mail as part of anti-plagiarism policy. There has been some variety in teaching or learning styles thus far, mainly text and library based teaching and learning supported by typed discussions. Some group work in the form of a Wiki was interesting and led to a piece of writing with shared ownership. I'm currently trying to persuade our tutor to issue the weekly posting of notes via podcast as well – and I think that she will, which will be great.

### The challenge of applying this in the classroom

So how does all this apply to Mrs Soames and her year class next Wednesday afternoon?<sup>3</sup>

Mrs Soames can, by using a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE):

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<sup>2</sup> 14-15 year-olds – Ed.

<sup>3</sup> This is what contributors were asked to consider – Ed



- Upload documents, presentations, spreadsheets for pupils to access 24/7;
- Set up chat rooms and discussion forums for synchronous/asynchronous dialogues;
- Devise meaningful online quizzes, activities and tests that “mark themselves” online;
- Initiate a wiki for shared writing and contributions;
- Send learners directly to outside links to gather information/compare/prepare;
- Invite their students (and parents/colleagues) to participate in online choice activities, surveys and questionnaires;
- Receive assignments online and give feedback, comments and grades online.

**What advice can I give to Mrs S having been an online learner myself?**

- Ensure that you include teaching assistants (in training as well as planning) for example they could upload quizzes or manage a supportive blog;
- Make it absolutely clear what your learners will be doing, when, where and how;
- Have some learning time put aside for acclimatisation/socialising and getting to feel at home in a new online learning environment;
- Find out what your learners know already about the online learning environment you’re proposing to use and any special needs they may have;
- Learners also need clear advice about what to do if the technology isn’t working;
- Feedback is essential to encourage and engender participation – comments, grades, answers, challenges – they all keep the momentum of the learning going;
- Ask for support for lunchtime and after-school access to online learning for learners without home access and ensure that they get priority over non-learning activities;
- Relate the online learning to the general scheme of work as seamlessly as possible;
- Make ICT support staff aware of what you’re planning and when.

Most VLEs originated in the Higher Education (HE) sector and were designed for post-graduate systems of learning – and these need to be adapted and used in many different ways to be effective in schools. I have come to realise that there are many differences in the concepts of e-learning between HE and school. Students within the HE environment are successful and experienced learners, motivated to learn and usually with clear goals attached either directly to the learning or to result from the learning. They have usually been rewarded for their academic achievements and succeed within a text and book based environment. Pupils within a school come from a diverse range of social and cultural backgrounds and vary in their ability, engagement, motivation, aims and aspirations and overall attitude to education and learning. They will have had a range of previous learning experiences too. For many lower-ability students there is a sense of being trapped within a system designed to fail them. The most powerful computer that the majority of these pupils carry on their person at all times is the one they are constantly chided to switch off!

Therefore I feel that many of the ideas raised in the HE sector can apply to e-learning within a comprehensive secondary school in England – for successful e-learning to take place the learners have to be engaged and the technology needs to meet the needs of the learning environment. There can be many differing cultures within a school and e-learning can bring them together in the same way as in HE. This can involve the incorporation of a range of differentiation and the inclusion of a range of learning and teaching styles within the e-learning being used – and inspired by the

cultures of the learners. However, training of staff and access to hardware and software by both teachers and pupils is a serious matter that has to be addressed.

## Conclusion

Learners can benefit so much from e-learning, whatever their background, ability or motivation. Integrated into well –planned and taught classroom lessons e-learning can extend and enhance engagement and achievement. E-learning helps to support learning as a continuous process particularly where it improves family and peer involvement and support in learning. This reopens the question of the “digital divide” – an important issue and one that is not going to go away. E-learning also supports learners with special educational needs and can allow some pupils equality in their learning environments that they have never before experienced. I also believe that Web 2.0 will allow a new beginning for those who feel that they lack perceived skills as the new technologies move to the forefront of e-learning content.

For more details of the MA ICT & Education visit [www.education.leeds.ac.uk](http://www.education.leeds.ac.uk).



# What are RSS feeds and why haven't I heard about them?(RSS feeds from an educator's perspective)

By John Evans

*In this chapter, John summarises RSS: what it is, and why it has proven useful to him in his professional capacity. It really is much simpler than you might imagine!*

## Introduction: what is RSS?

If you've never heard of the term RSS or RSS feeds you are not alone. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project<sup>4</sup>, 26% of the average American internet users have never heard of the term and a further 64% aren't really sure what it means. In this article I will give the reader a brief overview of RSS and its application for busy educators.

So what is RSS? RSS is an acronym that stands for Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication depending on who is describing it. According to Wikipedia, "RSS is a family of XML (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/XML>) file formats for Web syndication ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_syndication](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_syndication)) used by (amongst other things) news websites (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Website>) and web logs (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weblog>)... The technology behind RSS allows internet users to subscribe to websites that have provided RSS feeds; these are typically sites that change or add content regularly."<sup>5</sup> The vast amount of information on the internet coupled with its accessibility for any user can be overwhelming. Now this is the exciting part...instead of the user being overwhelmed and overloaded, s/he is placed in control RSS of the information coming to them. Users can set up their own collection of incoming information feeds of their choice and sift through it with less difficulty and far less time than ever before.

Web logs (blogs) and news sites are the most common use of RSS feeds. When new content is added to a blog or web site, that content is automatically updated to every subscriber of that RSS feed. A software program called an aggregator automatically pulls in the feeds. The aggregator program can be desktop-based residing on one computer, or web-based allowing access from multiple computers. Most aggregator programs are free and can be easily obtained on the internet. Some web browsers now have a newsreader feature built in and the feature is promised for newer operating systems coming in the near future such as Microsoft's upcoming Windows update. Popular sites such as My MSN, My Yahoo! and My AOL each have built-in RSS readers. All that is required by the individual once they have decided on their feed aggregator of choice is a few minutes of setup and then subscribing to the feeds that interest them.

Setting up a news aggregator is relatively easy. My preference is Bloglines at [www.bloglines.com](http://www.bloglines.com). I like it because it is free and it is web-based, meaning I can access it from any computer connected to the web.

There are many guides on the internet to take you through the set-up procedure but the one I prefer is "RSS: a Quick Start Guide for Educators"<sup>6</sup> at Will Richardson's Weblogg-Ed blog ([www.weblogged.com](http://www.weblogged.com)). This will take you through setting up a Bloglines account and has plentiful tips for using it in education. A more extensive

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<sup>4</sup> PEW/INTERNET & AMERICAN LIFE PROJECT (July 2005). Retrieved from [http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP\\_Data\\_Techterm\\_aware.pdf](http://www.pewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_Data_Techterm_aware.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Wikipedia, Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS\\_%28file\\_format%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/RSS_%28file_format%29), November 2005

<sup>6</sup> Richardson, W., RSS: A Quick Start Guide for Educators, Ver. 1.5, Updated 3/29/05 Retrieved from [www.weblogg-ed.com](http://www.weblogg-ed.com).

explanation of RSS Feeds can be found at the Contentious<sup>7</sup> blog written by Amy Gahran, a self-described content strategist, in her 12 part series entitled “What are Web Feeds (RSS) and Why Should You Care?”

So why would this be of interest to you? Well, if you are using the internet as a source of information, and visit sites on a regular basis, sifting through the material you like to read can eat up a lot of the time in your day. With RSS feeds set up in your aggregator, you'd only have to go to one location to read all of the news content on all of those sites. As Will Richardson, teacher and self proclaimed blog evangelist and RSS advocate explains in his Quick Start Guide, “when you're ready, you open the aggregator to read the individual stories, file them for later use, click through to the site itself, or delete them if they're not relevant. In other words, you check one site instead of 30... not a bad trade-off for a typically busy teacher”<sup>8</sup>. For busy educators, any tool that can save them some of their valuable time is a welcome resource.

### Finding RSS feeds

Internet sites that have RSS feeds can be determined by the presence of any of these icons:



Sometimes they are displayed boldly near the top of the web page or they may be hidden near the bottom of the page in an unobtrusive link. The fact is that RSS feeds are becoming commonplace and can be found more frequently. As more and more RSS feeds are created by a growing number of sites, RSS feed lists (eg RSS Compendium<sup>9</sup>) and search sites (eg Feedster – [www.feedster.com](http://www.feedster.com)<sup>10</sup>) are being created that list links to RSS feeds from most areas of the internet. RSS feeds can also be found through a simple Google or Yahoo! search.

### Educational applications

The following list is not exhaustive but just a few of the ways that RSS feeds can be used by educators. As more and more sites develop and support RSS feeds for their content the list is sure to expand.

### Professional development

I have found the ability to subscribe to various news sources, blogs and websites to be one of the most timely and cost-effective forms of professional development I have ever experienced. Through my Bloglines account subscriptions to various RSS feeds from blogs – which include technology-centred topics as well as subject content topics, technology newsletters, news sources and a variety of personal interest subscriptions, I have been able to keep-up-to-date on a wide variety of subjects from leading experts in the field. I feel like I am closer to the leading edge of what is going on in my field.

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<sup>7</sup> Gahran, Amy, Contentious Blog, What are Web Feeds (RSS) and Why Should You Care?, Retrieved from <http://blog.contentious.com/archives/2004/05/04/what-are-webfeeds-rss-and-why-should-you-care>, 5/4/2004.

<sup>8</sup> Richardson, W., RSS: A Quick Start Guide for Educators Ver. 1.5, Retrieved from [www.weblogg-ed.com](http://www.weblogg-ed.com), Updated 3/29/05,

<sup>9</sup> RSS Compendium, <http://allrss.com/rssfeeds.html>. This is a collection of links to major collections of feeds, sorted into categories. Ex. Companies/Business, Education, Finance, etc., November 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Feedster, [www.feedster.com](http://www.feedster.com). Search tool for finding RSS feeds from a variety of sources on the Web, November 2005.

### **Time saving**

I used to spend a large amount of time surfing the internet for topic specific content. Now I'm tracking more information in a shorter period of time. One of the nicest things about RSS feeds is that for those content sites I have subscribed to the information about content updates on the site comes to me. I no longer have to surf through a long list of sites in my favorites list. I choose the sources of the information that I receive and can choose to read it now or later.

### **Up-to-the-minute content specific feeds in your teaching area**

Any teacher of a content area such as social studies or world events can find up to the minute information via an RSS feed. For example if the teacher were focusing on a particular current world event, it is possible to subscribe to and read news on that topic from several different sources. The aggregator checks for feeds at regular intervals from 15 minutes to hourly. The updated information is timely, immediate and because you can get information from a number of reputable sources you know the information is accurate.

### **Information coming from contrasting sources**

Teachers and their students could subscribe to feeds from different parts of the news world about a current event in the news to compare and contrast the information and/or to check to see if there were any biases. For example, an RSS feed from the BBC news may have a totally different emphasis on the London bombings of 7 July 2005 than the feed from the New York Times or Reuters. What would a news report of the elections in Iraq contain if it came from a Middle Eastern newspaper? Giving this kind of information to students allows them to experience current events in the timeliest manner possible with a world perspective on the particular event.

### **Sharing what you are doing with other educators**

Any teacher who is using technology in their teaching likely has some information that they would be willing to share with other teachers. If that teacher has a blog or webpage, that information can be shared with literally thousands of other teachers via an RSS feed. Whether a teacher records their reflections, a lesson plan, some web site links, a new concept or idea, other teachers around the globe can learn from their experiences.

While the above list is short, I do believe that RSS feeds will have a major impact on the way we receive our information in the future. Some marketing experts even suggest RSS feeds may be a viable alternative to email – no spam, no viruses and, at this point, no advertising. Being aware of and in control of the information and news that is pertinent to anyone is vital. RSS feeds allow this to happen in a relatively painless non-technical manner. It's an upcoming tool that any educator would be wise to incorporate in their professional toolkit.

### **Further reading**

See also:

<http://nlcommunities.com/communities/joevans/archive/2006/01/18/46606.aspx>.

# Uses for RSS feeds: delicious web sites for the classroom

By Quentin D'Souza

*In this chapter Quentin uses the social bookmarking tool [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us), to facilitate students' sharing and republishing of web-based resources through an RSS feed.*

## Introduction

This chapter assumes a basic knowledge of RSS and how it works. If you are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of RSS and different classroom applications, I would direct you to a guide that I wrote: "RSS Ideas for Educators."<sup>11</sup>  
<sup>12</sup>There are a number of ways that you might use RSS feeds. In order to better illustrate its use, we will examine how RSS can dynamically create and share lists of resources, books, or any other item, through a distributed collaboration framework.

In order to accomplish this task, we will use the social bookmarking service "**del.icio.us**" as the tool that will help to create and share the RSS feed, tags to organize items, and an RSS-to-html conversion tool.

## Social bookmarking and tagging

In the past an individual might have saved their favourites or bookmarks on their personal computer. Their bookmarks might have been organized under a few general headings. The social bookmarking web site allows individuals to store their bookmarks on the internet and makes them accessible anywhere.

Shared online bookmarks have been around since April of 1996 with <http://www.itlist.com>, and a number of other services link <http://www.backflip.com>. The contemporary version of social bookmarking sites use an organisational strategy known as "tagging".

Each social bookmarking site is a little different but all include the ability to include a description of the web site. These descriptions include keywords often referred to as tags, which help to classify the web site for the individual, similar to how you might use a heading in your bookmarks on your personal computer.

When many people use a social bookmarking site their tags seem to be repeated by others who use the same keywords to describe their bookmarks. This allows the users of the social bookmarking site to find out other web sites that have been tagged in the same way. Or a user can search through another person's bookmarks, as long as they remain public. Some social bookmarking sites offer the ability to make your bookmarks private and opt out of the social components of their sites.

## RSS conversion tools

Feeds can also be manipulated in a variety of ways. One example is the use of server-side or client-side scripts so you can quickly format and republish information from other websites on to your own website. One such example is Feed2JS (<http://www.feed2js.org>). This tool was created by Alan Levine, where you can enter a feed, format it the way you would like it to appear on your website, and then you are given a bit of JavaScript code which you place on your website. When the feed is updated, the content on your website is automatically updated.

## Using Del.icio.us to create lists with RSS

We will look at two approaches to using [del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us) to create and share lists of resources that support a student book club. The first approach will make use of the

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<sup>11</sup> D'Souza, Q. (2006) "50+ RSS Ideas for Educators"

<http://www.teachinghacks.com/2006/01/15/50-rss-ideas-for-educators/>

<sup>12</sup> See also the previous chapter, by John Evans -- Ed

network feature in del.icio.us to aggregate the student selected resources, the second will organize the items based on a uniquely shared tag. Each approach results in an RSS feed that is immediately shared with the rest of the class. The feed can be converted to html and placed on a web page, or subscribed to by an aggregator.

**Approach one:**

1. Students create an account at del.icio.us (<http://del.icio.us>) and share their account names with the rest of the class.
2. The teacher uses the network feature in del.icio.us (i.e. <http://del.icio.us/network/username>) to add all the students to their network, by including the student usernames in the text box and selecting the 'add' button.



3. The teacher asks students to share any web sites that they find helpful in supporting their reading of a book. This might include the author's website, online resources that explain literary devices used in the book, book reviews, or essays.
4. Students use del.icio.us to save the web sites to their personal accounts and tag them according to important keywords, which help describe the resource.
5. All the students' feeds will automatically appear in the network feed of the teachers account.
6. An RSS feed appears at the bottom of the teacher's network section in del.icio.us. and is automatically updated when any new resources are added to the network.

**Approach two:**

1. Students create an account at del.icio.us and share their account names with the rest of the class.
2. The teacher and class create a unique tag that will be used on any bookmarked web site that supports student reading of a book. A tag for the class's book club might be 'mrdsbookclub'. A quick search on del.icio.us indicates if a tag is being used.
3. Students use del.icio.us to save the web site that fits the criteria, and tags the item with the unique tag.
4. By selecting the unique tag in del.icio.us (i.e. <http://del.icio.us/tag/uniquetag>) you will get an RSS feed of items that used this tag (i.e. <http://del.icio.us/rss/tag/uniquetag>), as well as the names of the users that tagged the resources.

Once you have an RSS feed that is based on all your students' del.icio.us accounts, you can republish the feed on a school web site, classroom blog, class wiki, course management system using Feed2JS (<http://jade.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/feed/index.php>) or any other RSS conversion tool. Students could subscribe to the feed in their aggregator and keep up to date on any changes to the feed in order to support their reading of the books from the book club.

**Why Use RSS in this way?**

Many of the benefits of using RSS to create lists of resources lie in collaboration, sharing, and the transparency that these tools seem to invoke in a classroom. A few of these benefits are:

**Immediate sharing**

What makes this activity so powerful is that students will be collaborating and sharing resources or lists of items over the course of actually using the items. You might imagine a student who is studying at home for an Algebra test and finds a great online



resource from reviewing a few mathematical concepts. That student can immediately share the resource with every member of the class through the RSS feed, while they are working at home, without much interruption to their studying. All they need to do is bookmark the link and that's it. The RSS feed gets updated and everyone gets access to the same resource. When all students tag their shared resources it helps self-organize their bookmarks for easy retrieval along keywords<sup>13</sup>.

***Many hands make the work lighter***

By using a model of distributed collaboration many resources can be gathered and shared by each person doing a small bit of work. Asking a student to share one unique resource and aggregating it, would be much easier than asking students to find 30 resources individually.

***Diversity if resources being shared***

Teachers can quickly create a broad set of resources through the number of users that are sharing resources. But they can also shape the type of resources that are being shared by adding new items themselves.

***Where did they get that from?***

When using del.icio.us to bookmark web sites used in the classroom, teachers get a look at the quality of the resources that are being used, and can give feedback to students regarding the need to corroborate facts and authenticate online information.<sup>14</sup>

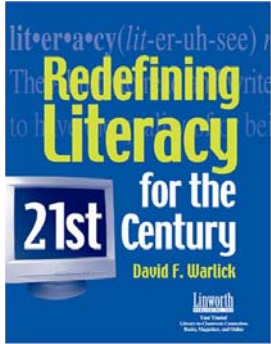
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<sup>13</sup> See section 11 and, in particular, Social Bookmarking And Tagging As Learning Aids by David Muir – Ed.

<sup>14</sup> You'll find more information about social bookmarking in Section 11 – Ed.

## Book review: Redefining Literacy for the 21st Century

Reviewed by Terry Freedman



Redefining Literacy for the 21st Century, David F. Warlick, ISBN: 1-800-786-5017.

To buy this, go to <http://www.ictineducation.org/db/books>, and click on the appropriate link.

David Warlick, as anyone who has seen him in action delivering a keynote address or has followed his various blogs would agree, is the master of the counter-intuitive phrase designed to make the listener jolt upright and take notice. In this case, the quote on the back cover amply fulfils this function:

"If all our children learn to do is read, they will not be literate."

That summarises the goal of the book itself: to actually redefine literacy. Nothing **too** major then!

The book begins by describing a scene of the future as if it's the present. It's always dangerous to do that, and although it's a pretty thinking-out-of-the-box kind of vision, in a sense it is already out of date in some respects: namely, listening to a book on a tablet PC. It may be different in the USA, but certainly in the UK the tablet does not appear to have had the hoped-for unqualified success.

But that is, in a sense, to split hairs. The principles of the vision are sound, with technology being used and experienced as an integral part of the educational process (in the broadest sense of the term) rather than simply for its own sake. In other words, in Warlick's vision of the future it is well and truly embedded.

The story, as Warlick points out, is founded on a number of assumptions about technology and other factors – for example, the children in the story are confident users of the technology: in other words, there is no doubt that they are "digital natives". But, acknowledging, in effect, that everything dates, the author invites the reader to contribute to the debate online because, as he says, we know almost nothing about the future for which we are preparing our students. Scary.

The book provides a great overview of the digital landscape in an educational context. For example, bemused teachers will welcome the guide to instant messaging (IM) jargon (assuming their school hasn't banned IM, of course!).

What I especially like about the book is its checklists of action items. So many so-called visionary tomes leave me thinking, "OK, but what do I do?". Whether you're a principal, media specialist, technician, teacher, student or parent, this book will give you plenty to think about and some practical things to try out.

For USA residents, the book is excellent value for money at around \$26. For UK readers, at £25 it's a little pricey but, on balance, worth the investment.



## Book review: Blogs, Wikis, Podcasts



Reviewed by Elaine Freedman

Blogs Wikis and Podcasts: and other powerful web tools, Will Richardson, ISBN: 1-41292967-6.

To buy this, go to <http://www.ictineducation.org/db/books>, and click on the appropriate link.

The excitement of the educational possibilities of the read/write web's development oozes through the pages of this book. The book begins with an overview of what the read/write web is and an overview of the tools available. It then goes into detail in each chapter on podcasts, wikis, weblogs and rss feeds etc. At the end, Will gives an overview of the trends the read/write web has brought to education.

Suppose, for instance, you've heard about podcasts, but you're not sure what they are and whether you want to do this with your pupils. Open the chapter on podcasts. Here you will find straight away an example given of a 14 year old who is "into" it.

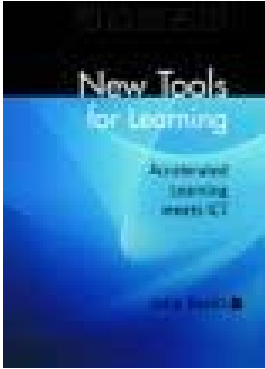
Read further and then you may find as I did that you will need some help or references, because this book is not for people who don't know the difference between RAM and hard disk space. If you are at that level you can still read this book and gain practical advice but you will need to check if what you want to do is possible with the equipment you have or propose to purchase.

You will find a wealth of information from and about practitioners who have and are doing weblogs, wikis podcasts and hints and tips if you want to do the same. I have to confess that I do none of these but I got a lot out of exploring the wiki leads Will supplied!

This not primarily an academic book. It is written so that you can open the book at a chapter, say on wikis, and gain a view on how other people do it, how you might do it and possible problems you may face.

However you read this book, you will gain a practical insight and food for thought about educational tools for the read/write web.

## Book review: New Tools for Learning



Reviewed by Terry Freedman

New Tools for Learning: Accelerated learning meets ICT, John Davitt, ISBN: 1-85539-131-7.

To buy this, go to <http://www.ictineducation.org/db/books>, and click on the appropriate link.

You may be surprised if you look in the index of this book: you won't find any mention of blogging, podcasting or wiki-ing. But on reflection that is not so surprising at all, because the book is about teaching and learning, not technology as such.

The book has a number of strengths, not the least of which is to challenge the reader in a non-threatening way. The author's approach in this regard can best be exemplified by his advice to anyone setting up an intranet or similar:

"... don't mention intranets unless it's going to help understanding or development. Call it a shared area ... descriptive but low threat."

The book contains good ideas for classroom activities and in-service training. As far as the former is concerned, I should have liked to have seen more step-by-step guidance in some areas, such as setting up a radio station. The elements you need are clearly explained, though not necessarily how to manage the process.

Another strength of the book is that it doesn't insist on using the latest software or hardware in order to achieve something. Indeed, Davitt states that version 4 of Flash was probably the best developed so far in terms of usefulness in the classroom, whilst Microsoft Word is too feature-rich for educational purposes. I especially liked the section on how to put an overhead projector to good use.

The book focuses on different learning styles, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic. What educationalists need to be able to do, if they are serious about addressing the needs of students with different learning styles, is to take new developments, such as wikis, and see how they might fit into the Visual Auditory Kinaesthetic (VAK) framework. Davitt shows how to think about these issues, and provides a particularly useful table which relates intelligence type to software tools and types of activity.

Phrases like "... much of what it foretells will come to pass" lend the book an unfortunate air of superiority which, having read other work by Davitt, and seen his presentations, I am sure was not intended, and the sideswipe at the UK's inspection body Ofsted ignores the fact that in dire schools the inspector may have been the only person likely to improve learning. Nevertheless, it's a good resource which, to a large extent, is future-proof.

## Effective e-learning through collaboration

By Steve Lee & Miles Berry

*Steve and Miles summarise some of the pedagogical underpinnings of Web 2.0 tools, and the development of the world wide web, and follow this with a very useful summary of the main types of application available for use in the classroom.*

### The benefits of e-Learning

E-learning delivers many enhancements to the teaching and learning experience; the biggest impact occurs when the technology enables social and collaborative interaction where all parties actively build their understanding.

It's hard to miss the fact that e-Learning provides learning resources in interesting electronic media and makes them available "anywhere, anytime". Such media provides enhanced impact, improved accessibility, can be re-purposed for new uses and also help improve differentiation. However the required media production skills can be beyond teachers' experience, and often publication is by commercial publishers, or a specialist media or web unit. This can have the effect of de-professionalising teachers, who lose control of the materials they use with their learners.

Even where teachers do remain in control of learning materials, a commonplace approach to e-learning is to simply publish resources appropriate to the learning. Such content may be 'interactive' or describe activities to be performed but is otherwise passively consumed by the students. This can alienate learners, who feel reduced to the level of recipients of content rather than participants in learning. Other methods are used by many teachers to more fully engage students, for example Tim Rylands' (<http://timrylands.com/>) use of the Myst computer games in literacy classes, resulting in impressive improvements in descriptive writing, especially from boys. Teachers in the creative arts often use collaboration and group work around technology to create works in media such as music technology, videos or animations.

### Learning in the classroom

In ordinary, classroom teaching, we now enjoy a range of approaches that improve on the traditional 'talk and chalk' method used on its own. These embrace a social, interactive and constructionist approach to whole class teaching. As stated in the "About Learning" (<http://www.demos.co.uk/catalogue/aboutlearning/>) report of the Demos-led Learning Working Group:

"experienced teachers draw on a mixture of common-sense knowledge, in which learning usually means acquiring factual knowledge that can be memorised and reproduced in written forms, and much more elaborate psychological accounts, which emphasise that learning is a search for meaning that is built upon pre-existing knowledge and is often realised in a social environment rather than something that simply takes place 'in the head' of the individual."

Many students find that their learning is most effective when they actively construct knowledge during group social interaction and collaboration. Characteristics of such approaches also include: an awareness of multiple perspectives, provision of realistic contexts, a sense of ownership and voice, learning as a social experience, an acknowledgement of multiple modes of representation and a sense of self-awareness (metacognition, or learning about learning). These approaches are variously called social constructivism, social learning, collaborative learning or aggregated learning. The theories of social constructivist ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social\\_constructivism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_constructivism)) epistemology and Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev\\_Vygotsky](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Vygotsky)) provide a rigorous underpinning for such pedagogies.

## Evolution of the web

ICT technology centred around the intranet and web are also in a process of evolving from a 'place' into social and collaborative platform in which many are rapidly developing a voice and an awareness of multiple perspectives. Publishing information on the web no longer requires programming or web design skills: anyone can do it with the new sites that are emerging. Some are calling this "Web 2.0" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web\\_2.0](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0)) and it is having an enormous impact on how we get things done, and is much closer to Tim Berners-Lee's (<http://www.w3.org/People/Berners-Lee/>) original conception of the Web as a read-write medium. As Ross Mayfield of SocialText (<http://www.socialtext.com/weblog/>) recently said in his blog:

"[Users now] Google, Flickr, blog, contribute to Wikipedia, Socialtext it, Meetup, post, subscribe, feed, annotate, and above all share. In other words, the Web is increasingly less about places and other nouns, but verbs."

For example news gathering is now performed by individuals at the scene and posted by them on the web directly, rather than being the territory of the traditional press and media. Furthermore, students are increasingly familiar with using technologies such as the internet, email and the web in these ways collaborative ways, often for social or recreational purposes but also on issues of group importance.

Bringing these two developments together creates the ability to facilitate the social constructivist learning<sup>15</sup> exemplified by the best classroom practice through ICT. This provides new, more effective ways of teaching and learning, beyond the traditional constraints of time and location. With this approach, the focus is moved from the technology and media itself, to the communication and collaboration which forms the heart of the learning experience.

ICT used in this way enables educators and students themselves to rapidly create and publish their own content, and enables the shared construction of knowledge artefacts and meaning, thus moving into the realm of social constructionist. Such creativity happens without the need of technology experts, but with plenty of scope for innovation, creativity and collaboration. Furthermore, because the technology acts as a levelling force, in which all may collaborate as equal partners, students who might not ordinarily contribute, perhaps as a result of a disability or shyness, can now join in activities as equals. Perhaps somewhat disconcertingly, the levelling effect also means that students can readily amend tutors' work, or enter in lively discussion with experts.

Many of the available tools allow for 'asynchronous' interaction, meaning each person can be involved at a different time as best suits them, with the archive of the conversation available to all. This allows students and teachers to fit in with busy schedules, meets the needs of those with a range of learning styles, provides flexible class timetabling, and means that class sessions can concentrate on key social interaction, with assessed activities left till later. In addition to flexibility in timing, there is flexibility in geographic location: students can contribute from any location given suitable access.

Teachers can easily view input from students, make assessments online and in most cases full audits of the 'conversations' or amendments are made allowing later analysis. For example, Drew Buddie (<http://merapolis.co.uk/moodle/>) describes an assignment for his ICT students to create a 'fair use policy' document. He created a shared document that could be easily be edited by himself and the students (actually a wiki, see below). After he seeded it with a statement that was obviously incorrect his

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<sup>15</sup> Social constructivism is the view that knowledge or meaning is constructed by a community or society, social constructionism is a pedagogical view that learning is most effective when a group construct or create something (a knowledge artefact) that embodies or represents their understanding. See also <http://docs.moodle.org/en/Philosophy>.

students soon made 28 edits to the document and created a high quality policy by collective agreement.

Information sites such as Wikipedia, (<http://wikipedia.org/>) the Open Encyclopaedia, and its siblings, including wikibooks (<http://wikibooks.org/>), allow students to contribute to a hugely useful and globally available resource. Thus students can produce, vet and elaborate an existing resource to develop it for others whilst learning themselves. Many express surprise that the editing privileges which such resources provide are so rarely abused, and on the exceptional occasions when they are, a process of peer review quickly and effectively deals with any difficulties, without the need for an appeal to authority.

These ways of working are also extremely effective for teachers to use themselves for collaboration at college or wider scopes. David Hargreaves, the chair of Becta (<http://www.becta.org.uk/>), believes that having educators working collaboratively in “innovation networks” is the only way forward for education, thus modelling themselves the sort of collaborative, social learning they hope to encourage in their students.

There is a cost associated with this way of working, however, and an institution seeking to implement such technology needs to be aware that, as these web-based services become the medium for learning, there is a need to provide a level of service and reliability over and above that required for a more passive, resource presentation approach to the web. Similarly, whilst such technology is essentially an empowering one for all learners, there are circumstances in which some students may not have access to the web from home, and some strategy for bridging this “digital divide” should be in place.

#### **So what tools are available?**

Well, a large range of interaction styles is possible and the following categorisation is a guide only, as many of these technologies can be adapted to other modes. Furthermore the ‘many’ designation given below may be a closed community, such as a class, school, or college, or may be unrestricted access.

#### **One-to-one**

##### **Email and SMS Texts**

Text is sent direct to user’s mobile (cell) phone. Email can be extended as a many-to-many tool through mail lists, which can provide for discussion, announcements and dissemination of documents.

##### **Instant messaging**

Text-based messaging, similar to SMS but via a computer and with better support for extended conversations; it often notifies users when their friends are logged on.

##### **VoIP**

Free internet telephone calls, often with video or shared desktop facilities; the market leader is Skype (<http://www.skype.com/>).

##### **Some games software**

##### **FOAF**

Friend of a friend – a means to develop trusted, social networks, see eg orkut (<http://www.orkut.com/Home.aspx>)

#### **One-to-many**

##### **Static content web sites**

Documents or multi-media made available for download or streaming.



**Dynamic content web sites**

Database-backed websites providing information tailored to the viewers particular requirements.

**RSS**

Really simple syndication provides a mechanism to track changes to multiple websites simultaneously, and to share content (typically blog posts) with other websites – an example of the semantic web.

**Blogs**

Extremely popular on-line diaries, easy publishing and sharing of text and other media such as photos. Comments can be posted by readers, and community blogs provide for shared authoring. Recent developments allow easy updating with text, photographs or even video, direct from mobile phones. Good for sharing experiences and views and are having a major impact on newsgathering. Eg Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com/>), Moveable Type (<http://www.movabletype.org/>).

**Podcast**

An audio-based blog, designed to be downloaded to a portable mp3 player, with notification via RSS. Video equivalents are also appearing.

**Folksonomies (or social tags)**

A mechanism to allow authors to highlight other similar content to a reader, using informal, keyword tags; particularly effective for sharing bookmarks (eg <http://del.icio.us/>), but also used for blog posts (Technorati – <http://www.technorati.com/>), and photographs (Flickr – <http://www.flickr.com/>).

**e-portfolio**

In this context, a web-space allowing users to share their work with a wider audience.

**Many-to-many**

**Content management systems (CMS)**

These allow online group creation of content with workflow, CMSs can also provide shared authorship photo albums and blogs.

**News servers**

Topic-based news sites with open item posting and comments.

**Forums Discussion**

Websites where text conversations are organised as topics and threads.

**Chat**

Popular live group discussion using text. Audio and video conferencing are effectively an extension.

**Games**

Multi-user games allow collaboration. eg Nesta Futurelabs' Racing Academy ([http://www.nestafuturelab.org/showcase/racing\\_academy/racing\\_academy.htm](http://www.nestafuturelab.org/showcase/racing_academy/racing_academy.htm)), or World of Warcraft (<http://www.worldofwarcraft.com/>).

**Wikis**

Web sites that can be collaboratively updated using only a web browser. They excel at enabling group development of ideas and information sources. Eg Wikipedia (<http://wikipedia.org>).

**Version control systems** (such as CVS (<http://www.nongnu.org/cvs/>) and subversion – <http://subversion.tigris.org/>)

These keep track of all the changes to a set of files, allowing several authors to work together on a project. Typically employed in open source software development, but can also provide audit trails for document management systems and wikis.

Almost all of these tools are available as hosted web services or open source software (itself a model of social constructionist principles) and can be readily installed on an intranet or extranet. One particularly effective approach is to collect together some of these tools into a cohesive, unified framework, often called a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or Learning Platform. VLEs have been used by Further Education (FE) colleges and Higher Education (HE) establishments for quite a while and, now that many schools and Local Education Authorities (LEAs) are also using them, the features will be familiar to students as they enter FE and HE establishments. Moodle (<http://moodle.org/>), the leading open source VLE, provides modules for assignments, chat, forums, lessons, messaging, surveys, workshops, and wikis, and online assessment amongst many others. An alternative, or perhaps complementary, approach gives even more control to learners, by providing the tools for them to create their own personal learning landscape for example Elgg (<http://elgg.org/>) makes available tools for blogging, social networks, e-portfolios and folksonomies.

## Conclusion

Hopefully this article has provided a flavour of the power of a collaborative approach to using ICT and the tools that are readily available. This is itself an example of such open social interaction, having been collaboratively created as a page ([http://schoolforge.org.uk/index.php/Effective e-Learning through Collaboration](http://schoolforge.org.uk/index.php/Effective_e-Learning_through_Collaboration)) on the [www.schoolforge.org.uk](http://www.schoolforge.org.uk) wiki.

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## Open source and Web 2.0

By Miles Berry

*Miles draws some interesting parallels between collaboration in the open source software community and Web 2.0.*

### About Open Source

“The bottom up organization, where distributed, self-motivated individuals creatively collaborate and work together on shared problems, has relevance both in terms of the creation of digital technologies we use for education and as an approach that could be adopted as part of the teaching and learning process” (Bacon & Dillon 2006)

Open source software has its origins back in academic computer science in the 1960s, where writing code was more about intellectual creativity and contributing something to the common good than about commercial gain, and where the respect of ones peers was often reward enough. I hope that the parallels with Web 2.0 already start to become apparent, as these are amongst the reasons why folks are only too happy to spend time blogging, adding to Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org>)<sup>16</sup> or posting photos up onto Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com>)<sup>17</sup>. Although much of the Internet is underpinned by open source code such as Apache, BIND and SendMail, and the Linux operating system has a high reputation for reliability and efficiency, open source has until quite recently been at the educational margins, with its principal appeal being free licensing, and thus savings in total cost of ownership (Becta 2005). Whilst most of Web 2.0 is free too, in the sense of ‘free beer’, the ‘free’ aspect of open source code is more about free speech and other freedoms and just as much as not having to pay licence fees. The Free Software Foundation describe the four freedoms that using open source software brings:

- The freedom to use the software how you want;
- The freedom to change the software to suit your needs – this is the essential idea behind ‘open source’ – that the users have access to the program’s source code too, and can thus change **any** aspect of the program;
- The freedom to distribute the software and thus help your neighbours; and
- The freedom to distribute altered versions of the software and thus actively contribute to the development of the software through a distributed community.

### Open Source and Web 2.0 compared

Such freedoms have much in common with the sense of liberation felt by many as they experience Web 2.0: that suddenly the web isn’t about content and commerce, it becomes a place in which they’re free to share their ideas and creations, that their writing, recordings, images, etc become something valued by others, which enrich the common good, and which others can take, adapt, re-use and improve. Nowhere is this clearer than in Wikipedia, where the model of commons based peer production (Philips 2005) that is central to the development of open source code has been applied to writing an encyclopaedia. Comparing the way Wikipedia is written to the way a large open source application gets coded is a great illustration of the way Web 2.0 has made an experience similar to that of participation in open source development available to pretty much anyone.

- For a start, Wikipedia is free in both senses – there’s no charge for accessing it, and under its Creative Commons licence, anyone can adapt and redistribute what’s there.

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<sup>16</sup> See Section 9 – Ed.

<sup>17</sup> See Section 7 – Ed.

- The motivation for writing or editing Wikipedia comes through factors such as recognition and a wish to contribute to the public good rather than financial reward, as with open source coding.
- Development is distributed, self-organizing and split into fine-grained chunks, so that anyone who wants to contribute can find something they can do.
- Each contributor's unique skills and insights can be used well – with Wikipedia, some will have expertise in one particular area, some will take on responsibility for editing, others for organization; similarly open source projects will have folk working on aspects of the core code, tracking bugs, supplying artwork, taking a role in advocacy etc.
- Distributed open source development has only been possible due to the efficiency of global communication that email provides, similarly Wikipedia has recognised that there needs to be a place (the discussion tab) where the text can be talked through as well as authored or edited.
- Large open source projects have needed fine grained version control systems (such as Concurrent Versions System (CVS) and subversion), which can track the changes being made by a distributed team of authors, and allow a roll-back to an earlier version if errors are introduced, which is mirrored by Wikipedia's History tab, essential for maintaining the integrity of the text, as well as recognizing individuals' contributions.

The sort of personalisation which Web 2.0 fosters, in which users go far beyond the realms of choice from pre-determined lists or limited customizations into a dimension of active participation and action (Leadbeater 2004), is also very evident in the world of open source software, where end-users not only have the freedom to adapt the code to suit their own needs, but through involvement in the development of the code have an opportunity to contribute their own unique talents and insights for the common good.

### **The differences between Open Source and Web 2.0**

This is not to say that Web 2.0 and Open Source are equivalent. There are key differences, which have particular relevance for those seeking to explore Web 2.0 in educational settings. Although Web 2.0 and Open Source are, by and large, free for the end users, there's far greater freedom to adapt and tailor applications if schools host the open source implementations of Web 2.0 functionality themselves rather than signing up to the hosted services out there on the Internet which, configuration options apart, are provided as is. Given that schools are rarely the target market for Web 2.0 applications, not all functionality will be appropriate to the classroom. A school hosting its own Web 2.0 applications also won't fall prey to vendor lock-in as and when the present penchant for beta-programmes draws to a close and continued hosting starts to require subscriptions. Alternative Web 2.0 business models, such as revenue through targeted advertising, might worry some schools, or indeed parents, especially where the school has no control over the adverts being displayed. Schools take seriously their duty to protect the children in their care, and the data pertaining to them, and thus it might not always be appropriate to entrust profile and usage data to third parties, who are unlikely to have cleared all their staff with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).

Most importantly, hosting Web 2.0 open source applications in-house gives schools the control they need over the make-up of the social network with which their pupils will engage online, and of the content to which their pupils will be exposed. Not every photo on Flickr or post on Blogger (<http://www.blogger.com>) is one which would be appropriate to access at school, and whilst many schools appear to take the line that this means the whole site needs blocking, far better surely is to provide the equivalent functionality within the school's safe, nurturing "walled garden". Whilst a school's hosted Elgg might not provide quite the same sense of excitement as MySpace or Bebo, there surely is a place for learning how to use social networking and blogging

safely in a controlled and monitored environment – digital cycling proficiency, I guess; furthermore in-house hosting like this allows the school to focus the use of these powerful tools on educational aims and objectives, supporting the broad curriculum of the school. I know many see part of the appeal of Web 2.0 as allowing children's work to receive a wider audience, but Shibboleth authentication makes it possible to allow access to the walled garden for pupils at other schools, and there's nothing to stop schools moving some of the private content out onto the public web for a wider audience without exposing individual pupil identities in this way.

There is, though, a downside to this. It's only fair to admit that it's far easier to sign up for an account on MySpace or Flickr than setting up web servers, databases, scripts etc for oneself. That said, this is easier now than it used to be, with Ubuntu<sup>18</sup> making a Linux webserver within the reach of most school techies, and projects like <http://openacademic.org/> all set to take most of the hassle out of configuration and integration. Aggregating hosting across a cluster of schools, or indeed across a whole local authority, as in Buckinghamshire<sup>19</sup>, makes things easier still, and goes a long way to providing a more vibrant social network and wider audience. Technician time to look after a webserver and setup the applications isn't significant, but neither is it free, nor indeed is the hardware to run all this, although this doesn't have to be anything very special, and thus an in-house open-source version of Web 2.0 is actually *more* expensive than free, hosted third party applications, although the gains through adaptability and child/data protection make this modest cost one worth paying.

Whilst not every cool new Web 2.0 application has its open source equivalent that can be hosted on the school network in this way, many do, including some of the most important ones.

- Jabber (<http://www.jabber.org/>) provides a way for schools to host their own instant messaging system, providing similar functionality to MSN messenger or AOL-IM, also allowing voice over IP.
- SquirrelMail (<http://www.squirrelmail.org/>) is just one of a number of web-based email clients, that with a mailserver ticking away in the background, can provide a service similar to GoogleMail. There are plug-ins available for spam and virus filtering.
- MediaWiki (<http://www.mediawiki.org/>) is the software on which Wikipedia (and a whole host of other wikis) runs, allowing schools or local authorities to set up their own wikis, perhaps as a child friendly encyclopaedia or, at staff level, for policy documents and collaborative lesson planning.
- Scuttle (<http://scuttle.org/>) allows a school to host its own social bookmark collection like del.icio.us, and even replicates del.icio.us's (Application Program Interface (API) so that browser plugins will work seamlessly with this too.
- Gallery2 (<http://gallery.menalto.com/>) at it's simplest lets a school host its digital photo collection online, but it also allows users to upload their own photos and comment on others photographs, providing much the same functionality as Flickr, but letting the school retain full control of its images.
- Elgg (<http://elgg.org/>) provides a whole host of key Web 2.0 technologies, like blogging, e-portfolio space, RSS aggregation, folksonomy tagging, podcast hosting and feeds, and social networking.

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<sup>18</sup> Ubuntu is a free Linux distribution designed for ease of use and compatibility, some of the development work for which has been funded by Mark Shuttleworth's Canonical – see <http://ubuntuforums.org/showthread.php?t=284808>.

<sup>19</sup> See Implementing Moodle in an LEA or school district, by Ian Usher, in Section 13 – Ed

- Although Moodle (<http://moodle.org>) doesn't feel very Web 2.0, with teachers remaining firmly in control of course content, a number of modules provide Web 2.0 functionality within the integrated Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), so for example there's support for podcasts, RSS, wikis, blogs and folksonomy tagging, and Moodle's Workshop module provides an effective way of managing peer assessment of students' work.

In fact, Moodle's underpinning social constructionist pedagogy, the view that learning is most effective when learners actively engage together to create knowledge artefacts embodying their shared understanding, has much in common with not only Web 2.0's provision for groups of users sharing insights and ideas, but also the collaborative co-production of software that is at the heart of open source. Back in 1993, Cunningham, Duffy and Knuth, writing about 'The Textbook Of The Future', listed some of the characteristics of a learning environment that would promote social constructivism, and I think it's quite clear that these are characteristic of open source development too:

- Experience in **knowledge construction**, as not only open source programmers gain, but also those users who contribute to bug reporting, support forums, documentation wikis etc;
- Appreciation of **multiple perspectives**, as the community based approach to development and support provides;
- Realistic and relevant **contexts**, as open source programmers gain through solving real world problems;
- **Ownership** and **voice**, again contributions, however minor, to code and user support provide such an opportunity in open source projects;
- A **social experience**, which because the code is open and developed through the active participation of a community, typically characterizes open source coding and testing;
- The use of **different modes of representation**, the same project has many facets, such as the coding, porting to other operating systems, the interface design, documentation, support, website, advocacy, etc; and
- **Self awareness**, as open source projects have captured people's imagination, provided the recognition of a peer group, and met the needs of a wider group rather than merely serving a corporate bottom-line.

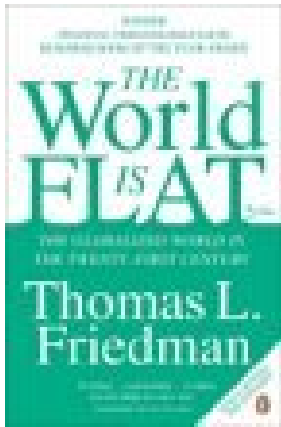
If these are things which we'd like to see in our classrooms, then certainly Web 2.0 can go a long way to providing them, but how much better is it to use software which has itself been developed through, and to some extent has come to embody, just such values and aspirations.

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## Book review: The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century (Updated and revised)



Reviewed by Sharon Peters

The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century (Updated and Revised), Thomas Friedman, ISBN: 0-141-02272-8.

To buy this, go to <http://www.ictineducation.org/db/books>, and click on the appropriate link.

*Special thanks to the following people for their input into this review: Patrick Lefebvre, Vince Jansen, Reuven Werber, Doug Peters, Sonny (gr. 11 student at Lower Canada College).*

The podcast of the student interview may be found here: <http://www.mtl-peters.net/friedmanint.mp3>.

### Introduction

I had not heard of Thomas Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, until I attended an American conference in July 2005. When a person attends one session after the other only to hear the book mentioned time after time, one knows that this is probably a book that should be read, so I bought a copy in the airport on the way home from the conference. Rarely is a book so impressive that I buy copies for friends and family, but this is the book for which I have cheerfully opened my wallet. Of course, I also blogged my responses and reflections about the book and shared passages with my fellow students in our graduate course at university.

Thomas Friedman is a journalist for the New York Times and is an experienced world traveller and political commentator. His story-telling skills bring the book to life as he recalls personal anecdotes and interviews with such notables as Bill Gates, Michael Dell and Colin Powell. Throughout his travels recently, he has noticed a decided shift in the pace and trends of globalization.

For the first half of the book, Friedman outlines ten global flatteners that are transforming the world through advances in technology and communications. We will certainly recognize most of them: web connectivity, work flow software, the power of uploading, supply-chaining, off-shoring, insourcing, in-forming (through search engines) and all the "digital steroids" we keep in our purses and briefcases (i.e. mobile phones with cameras, personal digital assistants). He never specifically mentions the term "Web 2.0", but essentially many of the tools (wikis, blogs and podcasts) are highlighted in the book. I nodded my head all the way through the first section.

In order to get a good grasp of others' responses to the book to prepare for this review, I have reread posts from comments posted to my blog in autumn 2006. Some of the posts are a result of a graduate course where I had introduced Friedman's book to our class of educational technology students. Some were viciously critical of Friedman. I also visited a discussion thread of independent school teachers who were responding to Friedman's ideas in the book. The thoughts expressed there were rich and informed. Lastly, I interviewed a sixteen year old student who had read the book over his summer break. His perspective as a student is one to which we educators should pay heed.

### A must-read for educators

It is the second part of the book that was most riveting for me as Friedman connected the dots of these global flattening forces and pointed out how it was changing various

societies and affecting foreign policy and economic issues. This is what makes the book a must-read for any educator, especially those of us who have access to the global flatteners as we teach our students. His first edition, published in April of 2005, was critical, in particular, of how Americans were seemingly unaware of globalization 3.0 – as he calls it – and were thus not preparing their children for survival and prosperity in a flat world. Friedman encountered so many concerned parents and students in the months after the book was published that he updated and expanded the second edition within just a year of releasing the first edition. I couldn't resist picking up the second edition and rereading the book again during my summer break in 2006.

Amongst other new material, the second edition contains a whole new chapter which deals with learning and education – “The Right Stuff”. In this new chapter, Friedman outlines four skill sets and attitudes that should provide our young people today with “the right stuff” for adapting to a flattened world.

It is not news that the first skill set he presents is to “learn how to learn”. Adaptability and flexibility of the work force has been a key message for some time now. But how do we teachers teach this fundamental skill? Friedman suggests that educators make our learning environments as engaging as possible. He urges students to ask around and find out who the best teachers are and take those courses, no matter what subject area they represent. The teachers, he reasons, who have the best “rep” amongst students, are the ones who have the most engaging environments. And by fostering an environment of engagement, students will be more willing to learn.

#### A student's point of view

During an interview about this book with a student from my school, Sonny stated quite clearly that he did not like school, but desired to be a life-long learner. School meant standards and unnecessary digestion of useless facts. He desired to see, rather, the interconnectivity of ideas and real life application of knowledge. We talked about how the Internet facilitates that linking of people and cultures. Our students want to see more useful and real-life knowledge.

The second theme Friedman presents has to do with possessing qualities of passion and curiosity. Those students who display these qualities are much more likely to succeed in a flattened world than students who rely entirely on their IQs. Certainly I would like to contribute to the passion and curiosity of my students. I have to ask myself – do I possess those qualities about the topics I teach? Do I transmit passion and communicate passion and curiosity?

The third skill set has to do with getting along with others and possessing good people skills. Again I will ask, what are we doing to build those skills in our classroom? How much collaborative and cooperative work are we encouraging? How do we evaluate these skills? Are we modelling these skills to our students as we work alongside our fellow teachers and administrators?

Lastly, Friedman presents a fourth theme of nurturing right-brain skills and credits Daniel Pink, author of “A Whole New Mind: Moving from the Information Age to the Conceptual Age” (see <http://www.learning2005.com/university/2005/8/10/dan-pink-interview-a-whole-mind-audio-podcast-text-transcript-new.html> and the book review in this section), for many of his ideas about this. Left brain skills involve more analysis and sequence-handling while right brain skills involve synthesis and forging relationships. It would appear that right brain skills involve more creativity, artistry and emotional expression than the left brain skills and these are the differences that will set apart those who can succeed in a flattened world. How do we encourage our students to use more right-brain skills? How do we get an educational system that focuses so

much on science, mathematics and standardized testing to include more right-brain skill-stretching activities?

Friedman also presented many examples of what it will take for businesses to succeed in a flattened world with a potent warning for those who resist the changes that will become necessary to survive. I wondered as I read it if our school system should be taking note of those same warnings and preparing ourselves for the inevitability of a different world.

The book certainly has generated a fair amount of controversy and criticism. Some have thought that he overstates his case; indeed, Sonny, my student, found it hard to see the dramatic changes at his local level and was frustrated by that. One of my colleagues who teaches in the public school system told me that these ideas couldn't be easily applied in the Québec education system and that there are too many variables and barriers controlled by institutions who do not wish their leadership to be questioned. I wonder how many other teachers think similarly about their educational system.

However, in my reading of the thoughts of international educators, they certainly seemed the most emphatic in their agreement of Friedman's ideas. They had witnessed different cultures and societies and their willingness to learn and how technology had facilitated that. They had witnessed the flattening.

#### **We're not there yet...**

No, the world is not yet completely flat, not by a long way yet. Last August, when I asked my friend, Reuven, in Israel, about when he realized the world was flat, he said it was a difficult concept to comprehend when missiles were being directed and launched at him. Hard to argue with that. Friedman's perspective on the various examples of flattened and unflattened countries in the Middle East greatly helped my own understanding of some of the hatred and violence in that part of the world.

To be sure, Friedman's perspective is very American. Those in the eastern and southern hemispheres have been the most vocal in pointing out that fact. However, this certainly should not prevent those in other cultures from reading the book. Let's keep alive the conversation about this flattening of the world.

I asked myself the question posed by Friedman throughout the book, "where were you when you realized the world was flat?" It was probably in the spring of 2004, a little earlier than most, I suppose, when I successfully managed to have two other sets of students, one in Michigan and one in Israel, provide a real-time webcam exchange at the same time with my own students in Montréal. We were all working as a team to create a website for a web design contest. It was an exciting moment for my students to see the faces of those students and exchange greetings with their team mates. We went on to win the grand prize in the competition. I never knew how much of an impact it made on my students until it received quite an honourable mention in the valedictorian speech at a student's graduation.

Where were **you** when you realized that the world was flat?<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For an exposition of how Friedman's book was turned into an international project, see *Our Classrooms are Flat*, by Vicki Davis and Julie Lindsay, in Section 4 – Ed.



## Book review: A Whole New Mind



Reviewed by Sharon Peters

A Whole New Mind, Daniel Pink, ISBN: 1-904-87957-8.

To buy this, go to <http://www.ictineducation.org/db/books>, and click on the appropriate link.

### Introduction

Friedman has not been the only one to mention this book lately; perhaps, because of his attention to Dan Pink's book, *A Whole New Mind*, I have noticed that recently others have mentioned Pink's book on their blogs, podcasts, and at conferences. Indeed, I have heard that at least one conference made this book required reading before attendance. Once again, I found myself picking up a copy to see what all the fuss was about.

I would classify *A Whole New Mind* as a self-help book. Most of the time, these are not my favourite genre of books, but overall, it was an enjoyable and thought-provoking read. Pink's intent was not to provide commentary on or insight to global trends, politics and relations, such as Friedman had done. The book is much more than classifying distinctions between left and right brain behaviour, although he does provide some fascinating background information about neuroscience. Mostly, the book is designed to challenge the reader to engage in what Pink calls right-brain thinking to provide balance to what he states has been a left-brain dominated focus in education and culture during the last century.

### From information age to conceptual age

In the first part of the book, Pink makes the argument for a shift to the Conceptual Age from the Information Age. During the Information Age, the focus was on creating knowledge workers for a knowledge-based economy. However, just as Friedman points out, Pink warns that those kind of workers and that kind of work can be had cheaply now overseas, citing China and India in particular. As Western society evolves from industrial, to knowledge, and now to conceptual age, we need to be using more "R(ight)-Directed Thinking" in order to possess a whole new mind.

### The new "six senses"

Pink selects "six senses" to develop as we round out our L-directed brains - design, story, symphony, empathy, play, and meaning. After each chapter highlighting one of these six senses, he provides a "portfolio" section filled with ideas, titles of books, and websites that contain exercises that will help stretch our senses of R-directed thinking. In the weeks that I have handled the book, I have found myself taking up some of his recommendations.

### Story-telling and empathy

As a teacher of English language and literature, the sense most special to me was "story". Story-telling has transcended culture and time; it is encouraging to hear his perception that story-tellers and story-telling have an important value in this new culture. Pink practices what he preaches about its value by including many stories to illustrate his points throughout the book. The quality of empathy was also identified by Friedman as an important one to develop, and both authors, unfortunately, spent far too little time expanding on this idea in their books. How to promote and encourage empathy in our children and students is sometimes a difficult and complex task in our western culture. Empathy also is related very closely to skills in collaboration, which we also need to be promoting in our students.

### Meaning and spirituality

The final chapter about meaning probes the value of spirituality. Pink claims that this is the most important sense of the six, and he does include a number of interesting research studies that explore the importance of a faith-based lifestyle. Many readers will be delighted to discover that spirituality is beginning to be acknowledged as an important facet even within employment environments which are religion-neutral. In fact, that chapter of the book has challenged me to try not to compartmentalize matters of faith so much.

### Conclusion

Overall, A Whole New Mind is an easy and engaging read. It reminded me to broaden my interests beyond the textual, to become more mindful of the visual and aural, and to appreciate the nuances of design.

## A teen's view of "Their Space" and internet safety

*Sarah Hillier reviews the recently-published Their Space<sup>21</sup> from a teenager's perspective. Are teenagers always as naive as adults tend to portray them? Sarah discusses, amongst other things, the importance of taking a pragmatic approach as against constant risk assessment.*

### A sceptic speaks...

I have always been sceptical of adults trying to understand and evaluate teenage behaviour, so it was perhaps with a biased mind that I read the "Their Space" report on teenage use of technology. Indeed through most of my first reading of it my thoughts consisted mainly of "Well isn't that obvious?" in regards to most of what was being said about today's teens and technology. That isn't a dig at the people who did the study – it is, at least in my mind, a compliment that they have got managed to analyse the most difficult and hormonal human resources on the planet so effectively. I didn't agree with all of it because, naturally, perspective on the issues of technology (and in particular focusing on views of internet safety) varies from person to person, but on the whole I thought it was a pretty good attempt at understanding teens and technology today. I had two somewhat minor uncertainties about what was being said; otherwise I thought that what they were saying was well-founded and true in my experiences.

I won't say that it was an interesting read for me though: it is like asking a religious person to read a book about why they should believe in God – I already knew and appreciated what they were telling me and so was not particularly interested by it. But for the adults who want to understand the relationship between teenagers and technology, I'm sure it would make an interesting read.

### First impressions

My first impression was that the writers did not stress how small a group of "digital pioneers" there are. They are not a very large community and are not always viewed in such a respected light as they are painted in Their Space– most teens nowadays that I know, although relying on these "pioneers" for help getting into and improving their efficiency on Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>) and Myspace (<http://www.myspace.com>) sites and for removing proxy detection from school and home computer systems so they can access forbidden sites, are still on the whole referring to them as "computer nerds/geeks". Sad, but true I'm afraid. Teens hate it when adults put us into social groups, yet we are usually the most guilty of doing this (for example chavs, skets, emos, Goths and plastics are some of the terms used to define social groups by teenagers).

### Teens understand internet safety, but...

My second thought, probably the thing that hit me the most, was that, yes, teenagers are not as apathetic to life as the media would have you believe, but when it comes to internet safety most teens are not the scrupulously safe kids quoted in the article. How many teenagers do I know that check out the strangers who add them on MSN or Myspace? Lots. How many of my friends and acquaintances ignore the results of looking up the complete strangers on Myspace or Facebook and add them regardless? I would say about 9.9 out of 10 out of the many people I have asked. I know most of my friends get a kick out of having a huge number of friends or contacts, and at least if they don't think this way now, they used to. Indeed, I know lots of them get bored when

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<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/theirspace> for a free copy of Their Space. – Ed.

they have received no comments, and so click on random people and add them without a second thought. This is particularly true of younger teens, not older teens.

Now you might be saying to yourself, this is all very well but teenagers have social groups and this girl's experiences probably only refer to her experiences with her own circle of mates. Well, I am one of the "drifters" of society and can go from group to group pretty easily. I have to say that my findings are pretty consistent between the social groups I know – they are pretty much all the same when it comes to internet safety: it can go on as long as I can chat to my mates. This is evident in the number of students who work tirelessly to find instant messaging URLs that work at school. It doesn't matter that by doing this we can put ourselves at risk of having our school internet privileges taken from us as well as exposing ourselves to potential dangers that are always associated with online chat.

### Risk assessments

When hearing about incidents of teenagers being put in danger or being taken advantage of by adults posing as kids on the internet, most of my friends do not really feel much sympathy for the children involved. We don't take much notice of these risks because incidents like this happen so infrequently – it is easier to take the view that it would never happen to one of us than to constantly make risk assessments of everything we do. There is a much greater risk of being hurt by a stranger when walking down the street or out shopping. One of my school friends (aged 15) when I asked what she thought about the dangers of talking to strangers said "Well, that's just tough isn't it – if you're stupid enough to talk to a weirdo on the internet what do you expect?". This was just before she logged onto Myspace and accepted three new friends, all of whom she had never met before in her life.

We also tend to ignore the risk of viruses. Ironically, about a year ago when I told another of my friends (aged 17) that my dad does not let me have MSN at home he said I should just disable the firewall. He did this to his PC a few years ago. Four months ago he had to spend a fortnight solidly trying to remove the 427 (I'm not exaggerating) viruses that had accumulated on his PC. Not all of my friends have such ironic stories but they almost all take the same view – to not have a link to interactive chat or blogs is to have an almost stunted social life and to be too overprotective of safety on the internet is to be irrational and generally a very boring person.

### Conclusion

Socialising is a very important part of teenage life and although the majority of teens would rather go out and meet up, we almost all rely on Instant Messaging to keep our friendships strong and to keep us going. Whilst being constantly surrounded by information where points of view and convention are constantly changing, it is nice to know that one thing can be depended on: friendship. If I had to choose between being able to talk to my friends freely and easily whenever I need or having complete internet safety I would choose to put myself at risk every time. I think most teens would agree with me.

## You're never too young to learn

By Kathy Cassidy

*Kathy challenges our assumptions here. Just because a child has not yet learnt to write, doesn't mean she is unable to blog!*<sup>22</sup>

"Christmas is past. Write something new", commented one of my six-year-old students on the blog of a child who lived in another province. It was February, and this student felt that his contemporary, who hadn't written on his blog since December, should be recording new thoughts on his blog the way all of my students were. Blogging, podcasts and wikis are all part of a regular day in the classroom for my students.

### Blogs

Blogging with young children presents a unique challenge—they can't yet write! Despite this, I have found that writing on a blog enables a young child to communicate with the world, and encourages his literacy development.

I have always used Blogmeister as my blogging tool<sup>23</sup>. David Warlick has provided an excellent tool for teachers and is very responsive to the need for changes or modifications. It is simple to use, and to begin all you have to do is email David. There is a link right on the Blogmeister home page at <http://classblogmeister.com/index.php>.

The children are thrilled with a couple of features of Blogmeister. The most popular is that it records the number of page views. It is pretty inspiring to be six years old and to think that over one hundred people have viewed your blog. Why would you want to write on paper for your teacher to see when you can write on your blog for the world to see?

The other popular feature with the children is that people can comment on their writing. Peers, parents, friends and even people my children have never met can comment on what has been written. The children are excited to see what others have said to them and love to comment on the writing of their peers.

A feature of Blogmeister that I, as the teacher, love is that all articles and comments have to come to me to be approved before they are published. Like their older counterparts, my children need to be taught what is appropriate to say online. We discuss what is appropriate every year and in the three years that my children have been blogging, I have only had to reject three articles; however, I appreciate that I had the opportunity to do so. In each case, I was able to use the inappropriate comment as a teaching moment.

The children in my class begin blogging as soon as I can get permission slips back from their parents at the start of the school year. I have found it extremely useful to have at least one other adult in the room with us when we begin to blog. Parents and educational assistants are ideal for this. The other tool that I would not like to be without is an LCD projector. Each year, I have created a fictitious blogging account in my class list that I use to demonstrate the "how to's". When we are first setting up an account, we go through the steps together with me demonstrating in "Practice Pete's" account (which is projected with the LCD projector) as we go.

There is a spot on each student's blog for him or her to insert a picture. I have the students insert a picture of themselves that they have previously drawn and saved using the program KidPix<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> For a video account of Kathy's work, see Telling the New Story at <http://video.google.co.uk/videoplay?docid=7879323924488591491&q=kathy+cassidy>.

<sup>23</sup> See also Section 5, and in particular David Warlick's account of the development of Class Blogmeister, and Drew Buddie's review of Class Blogmeister. – Ed.

<sup>24</sup> See [http://www.learningcompany.com/jump.jsp?itemID=87&itemType=CATEGORY\\_KidPix](http://www.learningcompany.com/jump.jsp?itemID=87&itemType=CATEGORY_KidPix).



When very beginning writers write their thoughts, they usually write their name, random letters or copy words that they see in the classroom. After the students have finished their typing, I ask them to read it to me, and then add an editor's note right in the text with what the child wanted their writing to say. (This year, one of my students who was blogging in the rather sterile computer lab rather than our print-rich classroom, typed "ibroc caps lock shift", but told me that it said, "I like you commenting on my stuff".) This way, if parents or friends want to comment on the children's work, they have an idea of what was intended.

As the children begin to associate letters with sounds, their writing becomes more understandable. As soon as most people can decipher it phonetically, I stop putting in the editor's comments. Because children's writing at this stage is just developing, I rarely do any editing. Instead, I let their blog be a showcase of their developing ability to write.

An unexpected but exciting result of the blogging that we did was our contacts with children the same age in a neighbouring province and in New Zealand. The children were thrilled to realize that children in other places were interested in the same things they were—playing sports, talking to their friends and learning to read. The things they found out about the children in New Zealand especially fascinated them. When we listened to their podcast, the children wondered if they were speaking French because their speech was so different from our own. The children in New Zealand lived near the beach and one day their blog entry showed the children holding their noses as they viewed a smelly, dead shark at school. "Where did they get the shark?" was the comment from one of my students. When we studied volcanoes, we also discovered that they had a volcano near their school that actually spit out ash from time to time. All of these experiences are completely foreign to my prairie children and led to discussions that would not have been possible without the blog.

## Flickr

Using the online tool at <http://www.flickr.com/> I have been able to insert pictures into my blog. Frequently, I upload pictures of the students that I have taken with my digital camera to my Flickr account. If I want to insert one of these pictures into my blog, I just click on the picture, then choose different sizes, then the size that I want (I usually choose small). Below the picture, Flickr provides me with the html that I need. I just copy this html and insert it into my blog.

Often, the children in my class make a picture in Kid Pix to go with their writing. When they do, I choose the "Export" option under "Save". This saves their picture as a .jpg that can be uploaded to my Flickr account. Parents who look at my Flickr account can see their children's pictures there, but I can also copy and paste the html from the children's picture into their blog so that the writing has an illustration to go with it.

## Podcasts

Last year, David Warlick added the ability to post podcasts to Blogmeister. This is a fabulous addition for young children. Not only are they and their parents thrilled to hear their voices, but also it allows them to say things that they would find difficult to express in their writing. If I taught even younger children, I would definitely use podcasting as their first means of expressing themselves online.

To record the children's voices, I use the free program Audacity. It can be downloaded from <http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>. After I record, I choose "export as MP3" and then save it in my webpage file and upload it. After it is uploaded, I can copy and paste the URL of the podcast into the box provided in Blogmeister.

## Wikis

Although I do not use wikis as often as blogging, I have found them to be a useful tool at some points in my teaching. Last year, when we were working on what made a

story interesting, I set up six story wikis. Together, we brainstormed a name for the main character, and a beginning, middle and end for each story. I set up the wikis and then the children added to the stories during our “centre time” and frequently from home as well. Their favourite was the hockey story at <http://room4-wiki.wikispaces.com/>.

This year I have a split grade class that includes slightly older children, and I have used wikis in our dinosaur unit (<http://room2-wiki6.wikispaces.com/>) and to collect 1000 names so that the children could see what 1000 of something looked like. (<http://1000names.wikispaces.com/>)

### **Bubbleshare**

I have also found a free online tool called Bubbleshare (<http://www.bubbleshare.com/>) to be very useful with young children. It allows me to put pictures into a slide show, add some text and record one of the children reading the text so that when the viewer clicks on the “play” button, the slide show has oral and visual text to go with it. As with Flickr, Bubbleshare provides the html that I can copy and paste into my blog so that the slide show appears right in the text. I have also successfully used <http://www56.rockyou.com/> and <http://www.onetruemedia.com/> to add slideshows and other special effects to our blog.

After 3 or 4 months of support, most of the children that I teach are ready to blog independently and frequently do so at school and at home. They are excited to share the ideas they have with each other and with the world. Each day becomes another opportunity for them to “write something new”.



## End piece

By Terry Freedman

We hope you have enjoyed reading this section. If you'd like to find out more about the individual contributors, please see Section 1: Introductory Section.

You can find out more about the various types of application mentioned here in the individual sections which follow.

If you have any feedback, either email the contributors directly, or email me at [terry@ictineducation.org](mailto:terry@ictineducation.org). I'd love to hear of your success stories, or if you'd like to contribute to a future edition of Coming of Age.

DRAFT